

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 Sub c. 1. For use in connection with a network capable of providing
2 communications between a plurality of customers generating service
3 requests and a plurality of vendors capable of fulfilling said
4 service requests, a system for monitoring and controlling work
5 flows associated with said service requests between said plurality
6 of customers and said plurality of vendors comprising:

7 a main controller capable of creating a first work flow
8 record used to control a first work flow associated with a first
9 service request and storing said first work flow record in a
10 storage device associated with said main controller, wherein said
11 main controller is further capable of receiving from a first
12 customer and a first vendor associated with said first work flow at
13 least one of messages, data files, software applications, and
14 documents, storing said at least one of messages, data files,
15 software applications, and documents in said storage device, and
16 transferring at least one of said at least one of messages, data
17 files, software applications, and documents to at least one of said
18 first customer and said first vendor; and

19 an accounting controller associated with said main
20 controller capable of identifying at least one fee associated with

21 said first work flow and storing fee data associated with said at
22 least one fee in said first work flow record.

1 2. The system as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said first
2 work flow record comprises a plurality of work flow definitions
3 defining at least one process step to be performed by at least one
4 of said main controller, said accounting controller, a first
5 customer processing device associated with said first customer, and
6 a first vendor processing device associated with said first vendor.

1 3. The system as set forth in Claim 2 wherein at least one
2 of said plurality of work flow definitions is modifiable by said
3 first customer.

1 4. The system as set forth in Claim 2 wherein at least one
2 of said plurality of work flow definitions is modifiable by said
3 first vendor.

1 5. The system as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said first
2 work flow record comprises a primary work flow record associated
3 with said first service request and a secondary work flow record
4 associated with a second work flow associated with said first work
5 flow.

1 6. The system as set forth in Claim 5 wherein said second
2 work flow is associated with a second service request generated by
3 said first vendor in response to said first service request
4 generated by said first customer.

1 7. The system as set forth in Claim 5 wherein said
2 accounting controller is further capable of identifying at least
3 one additional fee associated with said second work flow and
4 storing second fee data associated with said at least one
5 additional fee in said first work flow record.

1 8. The system as set forth in Claim 7 wherein said
2 accounting controller stores fee data associated with said first
3 work flow in said primary work flow record and stores fee data
4 associated with said second work flow in said secondary work flow
5 record.

1 9. The system as set forth in Claim 1, wherein a first
2 service associated with said first service request is performed by
3 a customized computer-executable application generated by said
4 first vendor, wherein said customized computer-executable
5 application performs specific operations designed by said first
6 vendor to meet unique requirements of said first customer.

10. The system as set forth in Claim 9 wherein said main
controller is capable of transferring said customized computer-
executable application from a first data processing device
associated with said first vendor to at least one of a second data
processing device associated with said main controller and a third
data processing device associated with said customer, wherein said
main controller transfers said customized computer-executable
application to said at least one of said second data processing
device and said third data processing device to cause said
customized computer-executable application to execute more
efficiently.

1 11. A network comprising;
2 a plurality of customer data processing devices capable
3 generating service requests created by a plurality of customers;
4 a plurality of vendor data processing devices associated
5 with a plurality of vendors capable of fulfilling said service
6 requests; and
7 a system for monitoring and controlling work flows
8 associated with said service requests between said plurality of
9 customers and said plurality of vendors comprising:
10 a main controller capable of creating a first work
11 flow record used to control a first work flow associated with
12 a first service request and storing said first work flow
13 record in a storage device associated with said main
14 controller, wherein said main controller is further capable of
15 receiving from a first customer and a first vendor associated
16 with said first work flow at least one of messages, data
17 files, software applications, and documents, storing said at
18 least one of messages, data files, software applications, and
19 documents in said storage device, and transferring at least
20 one of said at least one of messages, data files, software
21 applications, and documents to at least one of said first
22 customer and said first vendor; and

23 an accounting controller associated with said main
24 controller capable of identifying at least one fee associated
25 with said first work flow and storing fee data associated with
26 said at least one fee in said first work flow record.

1 12. The network as set forth in Claim 11 wherein said first
2 work flow record comprises a plurality of work flow definitions
3 defining at least one process step to be performed by at least one
4 of said main controller, said accounting controller, a first
5 customer processing device associated with said first customer, and
6 a first vendor processing device associated with said first vendor.

1 13. The network as set forth in Claim 12 wherein at least one
2 of said plurality of work flow definitions is modifiable by said
3 first customer.

1 14. The network as set forth in Claim 12 wherein at least one
2 of said plurality of work flow definitions is modifiable by said
3 first vendor.

1 15. The network as set forth in Claim 11 wherein said first
2 work flow record comprises a primary work flow record associated
3 with said first service request and a secondary work flow record
4 associated with a second work flow associated with said first work
5 flow.

1 16. The network as set forth in Claim 15 wherein said second
2 work flow is associated with a second service request generated by
3 said first vendor in response to said first service request
4 generated by said first customer.

1 17. The network as set forth in Claim 15 wherein said
2 accounting controller is further capable of identifying at least
3 one additional fee associated with said second work flow and
4 storing second fee data associated with said at least one
5 additional fee in said first work flow record.

1 18. The network as set forth in Claim 17 wherein said
2 accounting controller stores fee data associated with said first
3 work flow in said primary work flow record and stores fee data
4 associated with said second work flow in said secondary work flow
5 record.

1 19. The network as set forth in Claim 11 wherein a first
2 service associated with said first service request is performed by
3 a customized computer-executable application generated by said
4 first vendor, wherein said customized computer-executable
5 application performs specific operations designed by said first
6 vendor to meet unique requirements of said first customer.

1 20. The network as set forth in Claim 19 wherein said main
2 controller is capable of transferring said customized computer-
3 executable application from a first data processing device
4 associated with said first vendor to at least one of a second data
5 processing device associated with said main controller and a third
6 data processing device associated with said customer, wherein said
7 main controller transfers said customized computer-executable
8 application to said at least one of said second data processing
9 device and said third data processing device to cause said
10 customized computer-executable application to execute more
11 efficiently.

1 21. For use in a network capable of providing communications
2 between a plurality of customers generating service requests and a
3 plurality of vendors capable of fulfilling the service requests, a
4 method of monitoring and controlling work flows associated with the
5 service requests between the plurality of customers and the
6 plurality of vendors comprising the steps of:

7 creating a first work flow record used to control a first
8 work flow associated with a first service request;

9 storing the first work flow record in a storage device;

10 receiving from a first customer and a first vendor
11 associated with the first work flow at least one of messages, data
12 files, software applications, and documents;

13 storing the at least one of messages, data files,
14 software applications, and documents in the storage device, and
15 transferring at least one of the at least one of messages, data
16 files, software applications, and documents to at least one of the
17 first customer and the first vendor; and

18 identifying at least one fee associated with the first
19 work flow and storing fee data associated with the at least one fee
20 in the first work flow record.

1 22. The method as set forth in Claim 21 wherein the first
2 work flow record comprises a plurality of work flow definitions
3 defining at least one process step to be performed by at least one
4 of a first network processing device associated with the network,
5 a first customer processing device associated with the first
6 customer, and a first vendor processing device associated with the
7 first vendor.

1 23. The method as set forth in Claim 22 wherein at least one
2 of the plurality of work flow definitions is modifiable by the
3 first customer.

1 24. The method as set forth in Claim 22 wherein at least one
2 of the plurality of work flow definitions is modifiable by the
3 first vendor.

1 25. The method as set forth in Claim 21 wherein the first
2 work flow record comprises a primary work flow record associated
3 with the first service request and a secondary work flow record
4 associated with a second work flow associated with the first work
5 flow.

1 26. The method as set forth in Claim 25 wherein the second
2 work flow is associated with a second service request generated by
3 the first vendor in response to the first service request generated
4 by the first customer.

1 27. The method as set forth in Claim 25 including the further
2 steps of:

3 identifying at least one additional fee associated with
4 the second work flow; and

5 storing second fee data associated with the at least one
6 additional fee in the first work flow record.

1 28. The method as set forth in Claim 27 wherein fee data
2 associated with the first work flow is stored in the primary work
3 flow record and fee data associated with the second work flow is
4 stored in the secondary work flow record.

1 29. The method as set forth in Claim 21 wherein a first
2 service associated with the first service request is performed by
3 a customized computer-executable application generated by the first
4 vendor, wherein the customized computer-executable application
5 performs specific operations designed by the first vendor to meet
6 unique requirements of the first customer.

1 30. The method as set forth in Claim 29 including the further
2 step of transferring the customized computer-executable application
3 from a first data processing device associated with the first
4 vendor to at least one of a second data processing device
5 associated with the network and a third data processing device
6 associated with the customer, wherein the customized computer-
7 executable application is transferred to the at least one of the
8 second data processing device and the third data processing device
9 to cause the customized computer-executable application to execute
10 more efficiently.

1 31. For use in connection with a communication network
2 capable of providing communications between a plurality of
3 customers generating service requests and a plurality of vendors
4 capable of fulfilling said service requests, a system for brokering
5 said service requests between said plurality of customers and said
6 plurality of vendors comprising:

7 a main controller capable of receiving a first service
8 request from a first of said plurality of customers, generating a
9 first record associated with said first service request, and
10 storing said first record in a storage device associated with said
11 main controller;

12 wherein said main controller is further capable of
13 determining a nature of a first requested service associated with
14 said first service request, and in response to said nature of said
15 first requested service, allowing at least one of said plurality of
16 vendors to access said first record in said storage device.

1 32. The system as set forth in Claim 31 wherein said main
2 controller transmits a notification associated with said first
3 service request to said at least one vendor.

1 33. The system as set forth in Claim 31 wherein said at least
2 one vendor comprises at least one vendor capable of performing said
3 first requested service.

1 34. The system as set forth in Claim 33 wherein said main
2 controller selects said at least one vendor from a list of suitable
3 vendors capable of performing said first requested service.

1 35. The system as set forth in Claim 31 wherein said main
2 controller is further capable of determining if said at least one
3 vendor has accepted said first service request, and in response to
4 said determination, transmitting an acceptance notification to said
5 first customer.

1 36. The system as set forth in Claim 31 wherein said first
2 service request comprises customer price information indicating an
3 amount said first customer is willing to pay for performance of
4 said first requested service.

1 37. The system as set forth in Claim 31 wherein said main
2 controller stores in said storage device documents associated with
3 said first service request.

1 38. The system as set forth in Claim 31 wherein said main
2 controller stores in said storage device customer associated with
3 said first service request.

1 39. The system as set forth in Claim 31 wherein said main
2 controller is further capable of transferring messages between said
3 first customer and said at least one vendor.

1 40. The system as set forth in Claim 31 further comprising an
2 accounting controller associated with said main controller, wherein
3 said accounting controller is capable of tracking invoice data and
4 payment data transmitted between said first customer and said at
5 least one vendor.

1 41. A network comprising;

2 a plurality of customer data processing devices capable
3 generating service requests created by a plurality of customers;

4 a plurality of vendor data processing devices associated
5 with a plurality of vendors capable of fulfilling said service
6 requests; and

7 a system for brokering said service requests between said
8 plurality of customers and said plurality of vendors comprising:

9 a main controller capable of receiving a first
10 service request from a first of said plurality of customers,
11 generating a first record associated with said first service
12 request, and storing said first record in a storage device
13 associated with said main controller;

14 wherein said main controller is further capable of determining
15 a nature of a first requested service associated with said first
16 service request, and in response to said nature of said first
17 requested service, allowing at least one of said plurality of
18 vendors to access said first record in said storage device.

1 42. The network as set forth in Claim 41 wherein said main
2 controller transmits a notification associated with said first
3 service request to said at least one vendor.

1 43. The network as set forth in Claim 41 wherein said at
2 least one vendor comprises at least one vendor capable of
3 performing said first requested service.

1 44. The network as set forth in Claim 43 wherein said main
2 controller selects said at least one vendor from a list of suitable
3 vendors capable of performing said first requested service.

1 45. The network as set forth in Claim 41 wherein said main
2 controller is further capable of determining if said at least one
3 vendor has accepted said first service request, and in response to
4 said determination, transmitting an acceptance notification to said
5 first customer.

1 46. The network as set forth in Claim 41 wherein said first
2 service request comprises customer price information indicating an
3 amount said first customer is willing to pay for performance of
4 said first requested service.

1 47. The network as set forth in Claim 41 wherein said main
2 controller stores in said storage device documents associated with
3 said first service request.

1 48. The network as set forth in Claim 41 wherein said main
2 controller stores in said storage device customer associated with
3 said first service request.

1 49. The network as set forth in Claim 41 wherein said main
2 controller is further capable of transferring messages between said
3 first customer and said at least one vendor.

1 50. The network as set forth in Claim 41 further comprising
2 an accounting controller associated with said main controller,
3 wherein said accounting controller is capable of tracking invoice
4 data and payment data transmitted between said first customer and
5 said at least one vendor.

1 51. For use in connection with a network capable of providing
2 communications between a plurality of customers generating service
3 requests and a plurality of vendors capable of fulfilling the
4 service requests, a method for brokering the service requests
5 between the plurality of customers and the plurality of vendors
6 comprising steps of:

7 receiving a first service request from a first of the
8 plurality of customers;

9 generating a first record associated with the first
10 service request;

11 storing the first record in a storage device;

12 determining a nature of a first requested service
13 associated with the first service request; and

14 in response to the nature of the first requested service,
15 allowing at least one of the plurality of vendors to access the
16 first record in the storage device.

1 52. The method as set forth in Claim 51 including the further
2 step of transmitting a notification associated with the first
3 service request to the at least one vendor.

1 53. The method as set forth in Claim 51 wherein the at least
2 one vendor comprises at least one vendor capable of performing the
3 first requested service.

1 54. The method as set forth in Claim 53 including the further
2 step of selecting the at least one vendor from a list of suitable
3 vendors capable of performing the first requested service.

1 55. The method as set forth in Claim 51 including the steps
2 of determining if the at least one vendor has accepted the first
3 service request, and in response to the determination, transmitting
4 an acceptance notification to the first customer.